

**TESTIMONY OF BARBARA KERR, VICE PRESIDENT
CALIFORNIA TEACHERS ASSOCIATION
BEFORE THE LITTLE HOOVER COMMISSION
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STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 126**

I am Barbara Kerr, Vice President of the California Teachers Association and am here today representing the Association and its 300,000 members who are classroom teachers throughout California. I am also a kindergarten/first grade teacher.

The California Teachers Association is pleased to be invited to present to the Commission our views on improving schools and in particular how we believe it is possible to attract and retain quality teachers in schools with our lowest performing students. On behalf of CTA's more than 300,000 members, I'd like to thank you for this opportunity to address one of the most important challenges facing California and our public schools: guaranteeing that each and every student has a highly qualified teacher.

To meet this goal, we must address the looming teacher shortage. We must also deal with related issues, such as teacher burnout, that are costing us the skills of some of our most dedicated, experienced teachers. And we must stop being critical of teachers who accept the challenge of our most demanding students. Teachers working in these schools deserve our highest praise and thanks. We need to support them.

We are particularly pleased with the Commission's acknowledgment that there needs to be collaboration between labor organizations and other decision-makers regarding school improvement and teacher recruitment.

To give you an idea of some of the reasons why we think the problem of recruiting and retaining teachers is so difficult, I would like to give you an idea of what a factual job flyer would sound
Like in many of our urban and rural schools.

HELP WANTED: School District is accepting applications for full time high school English teacher. Must have a teaching credential (5 years of higher education). Must work 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. with 3 to 5 hours additional work per day preparing lessons, correcting papers, counseling students, and doing adjunct teaching duties like policing restrooms. Must be able to teach 35 to 40 students per class. Must be willing to supply your own library, instructional materials, and technology; however, school will provide a refurbished 1992 computer (limited memory) and dot-matrix printer – no Internet access. Must be able to supplement instructional materials with post-Sputnik information. Must be willing to work in adverse

conditions with peeling paint, leaky roofs, broken school desks and equipment. May provide a space heater or fan if you can find a place to plug them in. Must supply own mouse traps and bug spray. Must be able to handle unjustified criticism.

Sound like a job you would like to apply for? To address the recruitment and retention of teachers in low performing schools requires that we also address the fundamental conditions of teaching and learning.

TEACHER SHORTAGES

We are facing a national teacher shortage that is the result of population growth, teacher retirements, class size reduction, and not enough people considering teaching as a personal career option because teaching is not viewed as a valued profession. The United States will need 2.2 million new teachers over the next decade. So the problem is not confined to California. Our state alone will need at least 300,000 new teachers during this same 10-year period. Given these realities, enticing teachers from adequately staffed schools to currently understaffed sites is not the solution. That scenario simply guarantees us a “rolling teacher” shortage that will affect one school or one district after another.

Rather, our energies must focus on two key ways to ensure the supply of qualified teachers we need at all schools. The first way is to attract more highly qualified students to the profession and to provide them the support they need to succeed. The second is to keep our qualified teachers from leaving the profession.

TEACHER PREPARATION

California’s teacher preparation program must encourage the development of a workforce that is reflective of our student population and at the same time, is user friendly. Currently, it takes a huge commitment of state resources – about \$12,000 per year for at least five years to train a California teacher – a BA plus an additional year of teacher training.

CTA believes that students are entitled to have ethnically and racially diverse teacher role models that reflect the social and cultural values of California’s people. It is also our belief that opening wide the doors of teaching opportunity will be good for people seeking advancement and opportunity. Making teaching a viable opportunity for Californians will allow for better paying jobs that will benefit people that would not have otherwise considered teaching.

To improve teacher preparation, we recommend the following:

1. Provide grants and loans to encourage high school and college students to seek careers in teaching. Incentive mechanisms can be used to ensure that people that receive the grants and loans give at least a minimum amount of service as a public school teacher. Some of these grants and loans could be for service in more challenging schools after they have received some experience. We don't need inexperienced teachers working with our most difficult learning situations.
2. Provide an extensive analysis of teacher preparation programs to ensure that university resources are maximized to provide quality teacher training in a reasonable timeframe. Apprentice programs are essential, but should not be so lengthy as to be a deterrent to becoming a teacher. Quality – not quantity is the key. Streamlined credential programs that provide intensive, high quality modern training for teachers is essential. We want fully trained teachers in the shortest possible time. Time is money to the state and the teacher candidate.
3. More coordination between states is essential. Reciprocal agreements with other states need to be worked out.

ATTRACTING NEW PEOPLE INTO THE TEACHING PROFESSION

CTA has been actively engaged in efforts to attract new teachers, and we've identified steps California must take to help. First, we must maintain outreach efforts to promising college students. These efforts are a major function of the Student California Teachers Association or SCTA. Through our chapters located at colleges throughout California, the Association provides a welcome and support to students who wish to pursue teaching careers. Our member students network with practicing classroom teachers. SCTA provides these college students with encouragement and information about the profession as they complete their degrees.

CTA's Teachers for Tomorrow program is a support system for the development of an ethnically and racially diverse teacher population. The program provides high school clubs for ethnic and racially diverse youth to encourage them to become teachers. The program also provides public service announcements by ethnic and racially diverse celebrities to encouraging youth to enter the teaching profession.

CTA also supports a High School Cadet Program. Legislation like AB 192 by Assemblymember Scott would create a teacher cadet program that would help make high school students aware of the opportunities and the benefits of a teaching career. Despite the governor's veto of this measure, we will continue to work for the authorization of cadet programs.

Fiscal incentives, including loan forgiveness also receive CTA's backing. These include the expansion of current fiscal incentives, such as loan forgiveness, for

students who agree to teach for at least a period of years. Loans and other fiscal incentives are vital to helping students overcome economic hurdles in their path to the teaching profession. Recently, CTA backing helped win the enactment of AB 31 by Assemblymember Reyes. This measure forgives loans to teachers who work in low performing rural schools.

CTA's support also helped speed the enactment of SB 131 by Assemblymember Baca. SB 131 authorizes loan forgiveness for districts with a high percentage of teachers with emergency permits.

CTA also sponsored a measure in the 2000 legislative year that would have further expanded the loan forgiveness programs. Our special focus in this bill was on students with low-income backgrounds. We were not successful in getting financial support for the bill.

CTA has backed teacher intern programs that provide support and training to persons who enter the profession through an alternative path. These programs allow dedicated and qualified persons without full credentialing to begin teaching with support from a district, a university program and a mentor teacher.

Our national affiliate, the National Education Association, is pressing on the federal level for student loan forgiveness and other financial aid incentives for students who agree to become public school employees.

We must also consider that university students are looking for a career that will offer financial security over the length of a career. We must address teacher compensation issues.

RETAINING QUALIFIED TEACHERS

All teachers – including new teachers – should receive needed support. This is a primary antidote to teacher burnout.

With the implementation of intern programs, CTA has been backing the phase-out of emergency permits. Emergency permits allow persons without training to teach. They can represent a recipe for burnout. Permit holders are not guaranteed support from training teachers or mentors. At the same time, holders of these permits are under no requirement to earn full credentialing, although they are required to enroll in some courses. Emergency permits do their holders and students a disservice. It is sobering to realize that in the past several years, more than 8,500 emergency permits have been authorized by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing.

CTA also supports the expansion of programs like Beginning Teacher Support and Assessment or "BITSA" that helps train and support new teachers.

CTA also supports peer assistance programs that help new teachers profit from the expertise of their highly successful colleagues.

CTA supports the enhancement and expansion of staff development programs that are developed by teachers.

These programs can be vital to providing new and experienced teachers with information important to the profession and new techniques that have proven to be effective.

CTA believes that for staff development to be effective, there must be continued, systematic, coherent attention to the needs of both individual educators and the schools in which they work. Staff development should include appropriate short-term and long-term follow up. And it needs to be developed and evaluated by those who participate in the program. These staff development programs must include a commitment by district and site administrators to work in a collegial relationship with teachers. It must include the resources necessary to support the successful implementation of inservice recommendations and teachings. Because staff development is so important, teachers should have more control over its availability, subject matter, and quality.

There are other antidotes to teacher burnout that are also within the state's power to implement. One is to provide our classrooms with needed instructional and support materials. A recent San Diego Union Tribune story by Chris Moran pointed out that California teachers are paying "a teacher tithe." This tithe represents out-of-pocket expenses by teachers for materials that should be supplied for their classrooms. One teacher highlighted in the story contributes \$2,500 a year to her classroom. Teacher organizations put the average cost at somewhere in excess of \$1,000 a year in California. Our chapter leaders note that they don't know any teachers who don't spend out-of-pocket for their students and their classrooms. "Teachers will spend money because they want to enhance the learning environment...."

Providing quality school administrators that have been fully trained in the areas of teacher evaluation, community, parent and student relations, team building, curriculum, and general supportive administration of a school is also important. Business managers and school district administrators need different training than school site administrators.

TEACHER COMPENSATION ISSUES

Increasing minimum teacher salaries to make them more competitive with starting salaries paid to persons in other professions with comparable qualifications and responsibilities should be a high priority. We have made good first steps with the enactment of AB 1111 and AB 1087 by Assemblymember Calderon and SB 1643 by Senators O'Connell and McPherson that create incentive programs to boost the minimum salary for fully qualified teachers to \$34,000.

We certainly approve of the Governor's effort on the revenue limit deficit for next school year. This money will help retain teachers by making available for bargaining for senior teachers. Many of our local Associations have been able to negotiate double digit increases with this increase because all district in California received more than 10% in their unrestricted funds. We are very upset with districts that have not made agreements honoring the worth of our state's teachers. This Commission could recommend that districts pass along revenue limit increases to attract and retain teachers. Of all the money passed to districts, only about half of it will go to teachers if they get the same increase as the district.

The Association is also backing grants and loans to education support personnel and professionals from other professions to help them earn full teaching credentials. We've backed legislation to reduce the hoops qualified out-of-state teachers must jump through in order to become certificated in California.

TEACHER RETIREMENT

California has made a major improvement in the retirement program of California's teachers. We must continue to enhance retirement security for our state's teachers so that people are willing to make a career of teaching.

TEACHER HOUSING COSTS

CTA is also working on yet-to-be fleshed out legislative proposals that aim to help would-be and current teachers afford homes in the communities where they teach. These proposals could help add another incentive – affordable housing – to the list of reasons persons should consider teaching as a career.

TEACHER EMPOWERMENT

Not all of the antidotes to burnout are fiscal. CTA President, Wayne Johnson, recently reminded our 800-member governing body about some statements made by Pat Dolan, the Harvard trained and nationally known corporate reorganization expert.

Dolan's antidote to burnout was a prescription including "people who love their job, have information, control their piece of the action, have respect, and a chance to grow, not necessarily upward but laterally. Anything less than this, especially for highly educated people like teachers, is to deny respect and create a very frustrating work environment."

To help prevent burnout and to retain more of our teachers, we must work to give teachers at the site level more authority to make decisions affecting their classrooms and their students.

As Pat Dolan has counseled, giving teachers more say is arguably the most important education reform we can make. As Dolan has said often, "If you want to know what's wrong with a school, ask a teacher. Not only will teachers tell you what's wrong, they will tell you how to fix it." Too often, nobody asks.

That is why CTA has consistently sought to expand collective bargaining to cover professional decision making issues – not just hours, wages, and working conditions. Legislation is required to gain these expansions.

TEACHING IN OUR MOST DIFFICULT SCHOOLS

We must provide quality administration, facilities and support to schools serving our state's most needy students. CTA believes that quality teachers will come and stay in schools that offer high quality support and facilities. Special attention should be given to these schools in the way of real support for a quality facility. If we build a quality facility in a hard to staff area, we are more likely to be successful in attracting quality teachers to the school.

CTA believes that providing a quality facility and quality administrative support will attract good teachers to a school. Teachers generally find challenging students rewarding to work with. What they don't like is lack of support – they need the tools to teach with that include a quality physical facility, quality teaching materials and quality administrative support.

FINANCING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Probably the single most important factor in attracting California's best and brightest citizens to teaching in our state is to adequately fund public education. All of our ideas for making schools the best they can be will need funding. In the past year, we have made strides toward this goal with an ongoing budget of \$4 billion new dollars. We must continue this effort. So, first of all, adequate funding is the most important effort that California must make.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

At its simplest level, the education process requires a qualified teacher working with a student in a clean, safe, well-lighted place with sufficient materials, hardware, software, and support from the district and from parents. We have much work before us to achieve this simple equation.

Clean, safe, well-lighted classrooms are in short supply. Most classrooms in California are more than 30 years old. Many are in dire need of repair and reconstruction. Classrooms leak in the rain, with teachers using wastebaskets to catch the water before it spreads on the floor. Many classrooms are sweltering in the spring and fall.

Students and teachers on many campuses are huddled together in portable classrooms that do not meet the standards to which permanent structures are held.

On top of this, there are too few classrooms, with many schools having had to convert cafeterias, staff workrooms, and other structures into classrooms.

Happily, California has taken some first steps toward resolving this basic, but crucial issue. With support from CTA and other pro-education groups, California put before voters a \$9 billion school bond measure – the largest in the history of the United States, which voters approved.

Unfortunately, to qualify, districts need to raise matching funds, something that is often thwarted by the current two-thirds majority vote required for local bond approval. California needs to take the next step that will make it easier for local voters to approve local school bonds.

SUMMARY

To head off the looming teacher shortage, California must make efficient pathways for highly qualified persons to enter the profession and provide them with instructional and financial support to keep them from leaving.

- Teachers must be given more say in the workings of their schools, and they must be given the financial and instructional resources needed to get the job done.
- Public education needs adequate funding.
- Students and teachers alike must be housed in schools that we can be proud of – not decaying physical plants that seem to show abandonment of our young people and their teachers.

- Attracting and retaining the more than 300,000 new fully credentialed teachers that are ethnically and racially diverse will require mustering the state's resources to support public education. It will require working together to make the American dream a reality for every child in California.

Then every school district in California can advertise its vacancies as:

HELP WANTED: School District is accepting applications for full time high school English teacher. Professional salary, hours, and working facilities – a good future as a classroom teacher. Expect challenging students with first class support.

Unfortunately, the day this ad will appear is still far away. Last year, CTA testified before an Assembly committee on Low Performing Schools and made almost exactly these same points. In the intervening year we have made some progress, but not nearly the progress we needed to make in addressing this critical problem. We cannot afford to say the same a year from now.